

Water the Roots 7

Review of the Day

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
The Third Generation



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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Jnana yoga

The human intellect has a nature, a recognizable pattern. We think in a certain way, we believe in a certain way, and we observe and analyze in a set way. Our intellect is subject to the conditioning of society, culture, religion and lifestyle. Our society and culture decide how our intellect is going to function. Our environment and our religious beliefs decide what we are going to accept intellectually as true. These patterns represent impressions in the mind at the level of the intellect. They are also known as conditioning. Our intellect is a process of expressing the conditioning.



Why is jnana yoga a part of the yogic structure? Why is *jnana*, or knowledge, important in the yogic system? Many teachers like Socrates and Ramana Maharshi said that it is important to know yourself. However, asking oneself the question 'Who am I?' is an ambiguous concept. People have tried to analyze it from a religious viewpoint, a spiritual viewpoint and a personal viewpoint. Despite the thought that has gone into the question, an answer has never been found because there has never been an experience of 'Who I am'. Philosophically some people may say, "I am consciousness, I am the soul, I am the body and I am the mind," but it is not an experiential process and they get caught in the mental web of intellectualization.

There is, however, a process of knowing the intricacies of the intellect. We have to become aware of those influences which have shaped our intellect, which have made us what we are today, which have made us think, analyze and rationalize things in a certain way, which have given us a sense of what is right and wrong, positive and negative, just and unjust. Jnana yoga is not just an abstract process of enquiry into the subtle nature of an individual, it is a process of gradually discovering and adjusting the nature of the conditioning of our intellect, which is an important aspect of our personality.



A mental bath

There is a simple practice that you can do when you go to bed at night, while you are getting ready to sleep, instead of thinking about many different things, just think of one thing: 'What did I do during the whole day from the time I woke up until the time I went to bed.' It is a process of reflecting on your activities during the day. Say to yourself, "In the morning I woke up at such and such a time and then I went to the bathroom, washed and dressed myself. The first person I saw was so and so; then I had my breakfast; this is what we spoke about; and this is what I had for breakfast." Even if it involves such memories as, "When I woke up I had a horrible hangover, I had a headache and my eyes were swollen," see yourself as if someone else is looking at you and observing you from morning until night. Try to picture the whole day like a movie. See who you spoke to, where you went, how you went there, what your mood was, what your thoughts were, how you interacted with people, what your feelings were and what your understanding was of the different interactions that you had during the day. In this way, relive the whole day from morning until night.

After you have seen the whole day unfold before you, try to know if there was some mistake in your action, behaviour or attitude. What was the fault? Whose fault was it – yours or the other person's? You always tend to react to different situations and you don't have to feel guilty, you just need to know your reactions. If you were angry, it doesn't matter; if you were happy, it doesn't matter. You just have to recognize whatever state you were in and after that have just one thought: 'If I face a similar situation again, how will I act?' and you make a positive resolution: 'If I face a similar situation, I will be more balanced.' Then you go to sleep.

When you wake up the next day, go through your normal routine. At night before you go to sleep, again relive the entire day, moment to moment. Observe your actions, analyze your actions, your speech, your attitude and your behaviour. Think again, 'If I encounter the same situation, how can I act in a

more controlled, balanced and harmonious way?’ Then go to sleep. On the third day again live your life normally and at night do the same practice. Within a month you will find that your responses to the situations and conditions around you have actually changed for the better. Your actions will be more in accord with what you truly want to express.

Developing soft qualities

People have always believed that brilliance or genius is determined by the highest IQ that you can acquire; but in this century, people are not only thinking about IQ. They are thinking about EQ, the emotional quotient. No doubt you can lift your level of intelligence, but at what cost, especially if this intelligence is an intelligence directed towards material understanding, not personal understanding?

A basic flaw in our life is that we are not educated. I am not talking about universities, schools and colleges, there we are educated to cultivate and develop our intellect, but we do not have any experience of life. Nobody has taught us, “If you are going to face this problem, this is how you deal with it.” Nobody has told us, “Whenever you feel stressed, lie down on your bed and count your breath from thirty to one.” A simple thing like that we do not know. We study for an MBA, we study medicine, law, different subjects, but in this study there is no insight about human character and behaviour, or how to modify that human behaviour and character. This is a great flaw in our system of education which will take its toll on humanity one day when we discover that we are unable to face even one percent of stress and tension in our life, and we are subject to hypertension and heart attacks when confronting stress.

EQ, the emotional quotient, or making our feelings more expansive and soft, is one direction in which life has to develop. Therefore, you need to have a philosophy of life. This philosophy is not a religious belief. You can follow any religious path, you can be a believer or a non-believer, that is irrelevant, but you need to have a philosophy in life which guides your performance, and which defines your

aspirations and the aims you need to achieve before you die – before the end of your days. What kind of philosophy should that be? That philosophy has to be to overcome the negative traits and the restrictive qualities of life, and to cultivate the benevolent and the peaceful.

Review of the Day meditation

How to do it? Practise ten minutes of meditation every night before you sleep; this is an effort you should make for your own sanity and for your own peace. Twenty-three hours and fifty minutes you can give to society, to your family, profession, to the world, and ten minutes is for your benefit, for your tranquillity, for your sense of wellbeing.

For those ten minutes just sit down quietly and develop an idea in the mind, 'I am not this body, not the experience of comfort and discomfort associated with the body. I am not the mind, nor the experience of pleasure and pain which arise in the mind', total dis-identification, total disconnection from the physical and mental experiences.

So what are you? If you are not the body, if you are not the mind, what are you? You are just you, yourself, nothing more. In that experience of yourself, experience the space inside, the stability inside, the silence inside. Awaken the witnessing consciousness and after that, briefly review the activities of the day. If you find a challenging situation in which you reacted in a particular manner, then hold the reel there for a few moments, 'freeze the cassette', look at the situation and think: if I encounter the same situation again, how can I act in a better way?

If you continue to do this day in and day out for at least one month, you will find that instead of going like a bull in a



china shop, shattering everything around you, you will be more careful, more conscious, more aware of what you are doing and more in control of your responses. You will be able to manage your levels of stress in a better way by acknowledging them, by looking at the nature of that stress and saying, "Tomorrow I will find a better way to deal with this situation. I am not going to subject myself to the same agony I went through today."

Cultivation of awareness will take place due to this meditation of ten minutes every night. After having reviewed the activities of the day, observe the flow of the natural breath for five minutes and try to take long and deep slow breaths in and out. That should be your meditation practice to be done before sleeping.

You can add this meditation as a habit in your life. Not as something you are forced to do. Without any complication, in a simple manner, sit down, become still, release identification with the body and mind, review the activities of the day and analyze. Say to yourself, "Tomorrow I will deal in a better way with this situation." Plan, observe the breath, relax and sleep. That is the meditation.

As you become more aware of your unconscious reactions and responses through this process, you will find you have begun to cultivate the softer qualities of life which come with understanding, which come by putting yourself into the shoes of another and knowing the difficulties that they are facing. You will spontaneously begin to find a compromise, a balance, a harmony between your aspirations and those of other people.

Jnana yoga begins from here. It does not begin by thinking, 'I am spirit', or 'I am an extension of God'. This Review of the Day is a practice of *jnana yoga*, the process of knowing how you interact with your environment. It will give you a deeper understanding of yourself and allow harmony of intellect and emotion to arise. This will allow you to be broad-minded and to accept yourself in a positive way, to understand your thoughts and feelings in a positive way.

A practice of self-development

I suggest you do this practice of going back in time every night before going to sleep. It serves two purposes: first it allows you to put aside the worries that otherwise follow you to your death. Generally when we go to sleep at night we don't sleep alone. Our problems and insecurities sleep with us, not only our husband or wife. Our mental and emotional imbalances, anxieties and frustrations also go to bed with us. At the time of sleep, there is a load of these other components that are pressurizing us, altering the tranquil state of our mind. Therefore, many times we feel that our sleep is not a full, deep, relaxing sleep.

Secondly, by observing yourself and the events of the day, you are acknowledging the conditions and the states which you have encountered. If there is a negative influence from those circumstances, you can recognize it and see how it has affected your being and your performance. That way the unconscious reaction is made conscious, it comes to your knowledge as you say to yourself, "This is where I made a mistake in my interaction – I reacted in that way and I could



have acted in this way. I could have improved the situation in this way." This second aspect of the practice is a process of educating the mind to become aware, thus eliminating levels of tension and stress which suppress the creativity of your personality.

Inner harmony and self-discipline

To develop awareness is simple if you do this practice. You will notice that in one month's time your entire perceptions, behaviour and attitudes will change. You will become a master of yourself. You will be in control of yourself, and that is the concept of discipline. Discipline which comes from being aware represents harmony and it represents an extended form of awareness.

Yoga has never believed discipline to be an imposed structure of rules. You know what yoga says about such imposed structures of rules? If you get a dog with a curly tail and you put the tail in a straight pipe, after four or five years when you remove the pipe, what will happen? Will the tail remain straight? No, it will curve back to its original state. In the same way, the discipline which we impose on ourselves is just an external imposition of rules, behaviour and attitudes, which do not affect our inner being at all. The moment the external structure falls the real nature, which has not changed, manifests.

Is that the aim of discipline? Just to create an external structure and not change the inner being? No. The concept of discipline in yoga says external structures are all right, as per the conditions of society and the needs of the environment. That is fine, but the most important thing is to be aware of and harmonize the internal being. This awareness and harmony of the internal self represents true discipline.

Integrate the sadhanas

If you are battling through life, just imagine that you are a warrior and in the morning you put on your protective armour of the mantras. Then you go and fight. When you come back

in the evening, you have to de-stress yourself. There are arrows sticking from the armour and there are dents in the armour. So what do you do? At night, you remove the armour, remove the arrows, repair the dents, prepare it for the next day, and then go to sleep.

So how do you repair the armour at night, how do you remove the arrows and repair the dents when you come back from the battlefield of life, society, profession and family? Another investment of ten minutes is necessary. What practice do we need to add? This is when you analyze the events that have happened during the day.

In your mind, go through the events of the day in sequence, from the morning right up to the time that you are visualizing your day. Look at the events that have happened during the day and identify those events, situations, times, people or places where you have encountered conflict, stress, aggression and fear. By observing and recognizing the stressors of the day you eliminate them so that they do not become an unconscious seed which will sprout in the course of time. When stress can be managed easily it does not become a memory, which is good, for when stress becomes a memory, that memory can be deep, and to remove the intensity of the negativity contained in that stressful samskara becomes difficult.

Just be an objective witness to what has happened, and gradually, without reacting to what has happened, bring a simple thought to your mind, 'Is there a better way to deal with this situation if it happens again?' Yes, there is a better way to deal with those situations that have caused you distress in life. You will discover that within a week of this short meditation practice, you will be able to direct your efforts to manage the stressful situations in a better way. You will be able to observe your responses and reactions, and channel them in a better direction.

The repair of the armour happens with an analysis of the events of the day, recognizing: this arrow was shot at me by this person at this time due to this reason, and I responded and



reacted in a particular manner, but next time I will be better prepared. Like this, awareness develops of how to handle the stressful situations of life, learn from them and release them.

You can connect the different sadhanas that you have to help manage the mind and whole personality. For example, integrate the morning chanting and your meditation last thing at night, analyzing the daily events. You can frame your sankalpas for health, wisdom and the power to learn, and for overcoming difficulties, according to the specific challenges that you become aware of.

You can use your spiritual diary to work on these sankalpas and note the results. The Review of the Day meditation can be used in harmony with the SWAN meditation as well as the morning mantra sadhana. If you are working to develop a particular strength, or manage a weakness – then note those qualities as they come up during the day's review. Notice how that strength could be applied, or how the weakness landed you in hot water but can be circumnavigated in the future. When forming your sankalpa for the Mahamrityunjaya, Gayatri or Durga mantras, tie them to the actual needs you perceive during your review and learn new strengths which you realize will help in the different situations of life.

It is an interesting journey, keep going with patience and full resolution. Let old conditioning drop away and new creativity come into play.

Hari Om Tat Sat



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